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Title: Alf the Freebooter, Little Danneved and Swayne Trost, and Other Ballads

Editor: Thomas James Wise
Translator: George Borrow

Release date: October 6, 2008 [eBook #26787]

Language: English

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK ALF THE FREEBOOTER, LITTLE DANNEVED AND SWAYNE TROST, AND OTHER BALLADS ***

Transcribed from the 1913 Thomas J. Wise pamphlet by David Price, email ccx074@pglaf.org

ALF THE FREEBOOTER

LITTLE DANNEVED AND
SWAYNE TROST

AND OTHER BALLADS

BY
GEORGE BORROW

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION

1913

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p. 4

SIR ALF THE FREEBOOTER *Song the First*

p. 5

Sir Alf he is an Atheling,
Both at Stevn and at Ting. [5]
Know ye little Alf?

Alf he builds a vessel stout,
For he will rove and sail about.

Alf he builds a vessel high,
The trade of pirate he will try.

He draws on the sand a circle mark,
And with a bound he gained the bark.

Upon the prow Alf foremost stood,
And Copenhagen's koggers view'd.

O'er the wide sea he flung a look,
He knew the course the vessels took.

p. 6

"There koggers nine salute mine eyes,
All, all they bear shall be my prize."

Alone into a boat he goes,

And briskly to the koggers rows.

“Well met, ye Courtmen, clad in mail
Unto what haven do ye sail?”

“Unto that haven we are bound,
Where Alf is likeliest to be found.”

“What will ye on the man bestow
Who unto ye Sir Alf can show?”

“Silver and gold to him we’ll give,
All he can wish for shall he receive.

Presents of worth he shall not miss,
The robber’s vessel shall be his.”

“And what shall be the pirates’ lot,
If Alf the pirate escape you not?”

“His mariners we’ll hew and slay,
Himself we will in irons lay.”

“Ha! little Alf ye here may see,
Slight victory ye shall win from me!”

“Up, up and board, my gallant crew,
Cable and rope asunder hew!”

Till he was weary Alf he hew’d,
In fifteen Courtmen’s gore he stood.

He captured all the koggers nine,
And sailed for Norway o’er the brine.

To Rostock in the tiding goes,
Then palened many a cheek of rose.

Widow and child lamented sore,
This hurtful hawk had made them poor.

But they must thole this damage all,
Their tears but bootless, bootless fall.

Know ye little Alf?

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SIR ALF THE FREEBOOTER *Song the Second*

p. 8

Sir Alf will not stay in Norroway land,
For he passes his time there wearily;
Full fifteen lordships in fief he holds,
He can live thereout right merrily.

Sir Alf he walks on the verdant wold,
Conning his breviary;
There meets him Bendit Rimaardson,
For God of his sins was weary.

“Good morrow, good day, thou little Sir Alf,
Thou art a valiant noble,
But if thou become the King’s prisoner to-day,
The land will know less trouble.”

“I am not the little Sir Alf,
I vow by the holy Mary;
I am but a little mass-boy, Sir,
To the priest the wine I carry!”

Bendit lifted his high, high hat,
And upon his visage staring,
Said: “Thou art the little Norwegian Alf,
If mine eyes are the truth declaring.

“Thou wast a school boy along with me,
Thou darest not deny it;
And well at the school I remember thee,
Thou gavest us no quiet.”

p. 9

"If thou be Bendit Rimaardson,
Thou art my near relation;
If to-day thou wilt swear thou knowest me not,
Thou wilt do me an obligation."

But straight they took the little Sir Alf,
And gyves to his legs they fastened;
And away, away to Helsingborg,
With the captive Alf they hastened.

"Now take little Alf to the chamber high,
To the hall of the regal tower,
That the Queen at her ease, and her maids, if they please.
May behold this thief of power."

p. 10

Then up and spake the Danish Queen,
On first little Alf espying:
"The man that I see cannot surely be he,
Whose fame through the world is flying."

"Though I of stature be little and mean,
I've every manly talent,
And ne'er wilt thou bear thy lord an heir,
Half, half so good and gallant.

"I'd give my mantle with roses red,
And lilies flowered over,
If I might sleep one night with thee,
And play the ardent lover.

"If I one night with thee might sleep,
None knowing but thy maid servant,
For then, I ween, thou would'st beg, fair Queen,
For my pardon in accents fervent."

Then answered him the Danish Queen,
As she struck the board with vigour:
"To-morrow, ere folk to breakfast go,
On a gibbet thou shalt figure!"

p. 11

"Why hang'st thou not Ivor of Holsterbro,
And Canute of Sonderboro?
They were thieves like me, but they slept with thee,
And their death would have caused thee sorrow."

Then they took away the little Sir Alf
From the hall of the regal tower;
For the beauteous Queen and her ladies had seen
Enough of this thief of power.

They led the little Count Sir Alf
Out East from Helsing city;
With contrite breast he his sins confess'd,
And to God he cried for pity.

"Now I counsel each noble woman's son,
He in honour's courses guide him,
With his equals dwell in the land, for well
With all will that land provide him.

p. 12

"For many a day and many a year
I've plundered, as every one knoweth;
But what we win with injustice and sin
With shame and sorrow goeth.

"A Count was I, of Erling's race,
O'er Timsberg's rich fief I lorded;
That filled me with pride, and my will I would have,
Though my will with no law accorded.

"First, first on all who my hate had won
I murders foul committed;
Then to wife and maid no respect I paid,
But shamefully them I treated.

"From the needy citizen his goods
And his life besides I've riven;
Widow and orphans my deeds bemoan,
And for vengeance cry to heaven.

"Lord God to me kind and clement be,
And grant me this petition:
Let me gain, when this death of shame I've thol'd,
Into endless life admission."

p. 13

LITTLE DANNEVED AND SWAYNE TROST.

p. 14

"O what shall I in Denmark do?
To bear your armour I'm too weak;
The Danish warriors jeer at me,
Because their tongue I cannot speak."

It was the young Danneved,
He bade them saddle his courser grey:
"O I will ride to Borrebye,
And a visit to my mother pay."

O clinking were his spurs so keen,
And swiftly sped his horse along;
At Lundy Kirk in Skaaney land
He stopped to hear the matin song.

O first he heard the matin song,
To hear nine masses stopped he then;
And now it lists young Danneved
To mount upon his steed again.

p. 15

Out spake Oluf, the aged and good,
He was I ween the parish priest:
"I beg of thee, little Danneved,
To be this day my honoured guest."

"This day I'll break with no man bread,
Nor drink a drop of rosy wine,
Until I come to Borrebye,
And hold discourse with mother mine."

"Now hear me, dearest Danneved,
Give o'er, I beg, thy purpose straight;
So many of thy enemies
Before the town in ambush wait."

"O first I trust in my faulchion good,
And then I trust in my courser tall,
And next to them in my merry swains,
But in my own self most of all."

"'Tis well to trust in thy faulchion good,
'Tis well to trust in thy courser tall,
But do not trust in thy merry swains,
For they'll deceive thee first of all."

p. 16

It was little Danneved,
Abroad before the town he came;
And there met him his enemies,
Thrice nine in number were the same.

So numerous were these enemies,
For him that did in ambush lie,
All Danneved's swains they took their leave,
And from their lord did basely fly.

All his merry men took their leave,
And from their master basely flew,
Except the young Swayne Trost alone,
He with his lord took on anew.

"O I, my Lord, your clothes have worn,
And ridden have I, my Lord, your steed,
And I will stand by you to-day,
Nor leave you in your greatest need.

"O I have taken your silver and gold,
And I have eaten of your bread,
And I'll not budge from you to-day,
Although my life-blood I should shed."

p. 17

So they their backs together placed,
Master and man, in the forest green;
And in the early morning tide
They of the foemen slew fifteen.

Then they their backs together placed,
Where thick and high the bushes were;
They twain alone full thirty slew,
Acquiring honour ever fair.

It was the young Danneved,
To his side his trusty faulchion tied;
And now they both so joyously
Home to his mother's castle ride.

It was the young Danneved,
Came riding to the Castellaye;
It was then his mother dear
Came out to meet him, blythe and gay.

"Be welcome, little Danneved,
Be welcome to this house of mine;
What doth it please thee now to drink?
O, say, shall it be mead or wine?"

p. 18

"O, I will ne'er break bread with you,
Or drink a drop of mead or wine,
'Till thou hast given the young Swayne Trost
Fair Ellen, only sister mine."

"And do thou hear, my dearest son,
Hear what I now declare to thee;
As God shall help me in my need,
Brothers of Ellen both ye be."

"Now do thou hear, my mother dear,
Thou'st not to me the truth declar'd;
Where didst thou bear the young Swayne Trost,
That of his birth I never heard?"

"O he was but a little child,
When him from out the land I sent;
And, hearing it said that he was dead,
To none I did my loss lament."

Then up spoke little Danneved,
He was the son of a knight so high:
"Now I have such a brother found,
I never more will grieve or sigh.

p. 19

"God's blessing upon thee, young Swayne Trost,
To thee my troth I now will give;
I'll ne'er deceive thee, young Swayne Trost,
As long as I on earth shall live."

Little Danneved and young Swayne Trost,
In sables and mard themselves array;
And both of them took so joyously
To the imperial Court their way.

SIR PALL, SIR BEAR, AND SIR LIDEN.

p. 20

Liden he rode to the Ting, and shewed
His bloody gashes there:
"And these were done by no other one
But my dear brother Bear."

With humble air upstood Sir Bear,
And for leave to speak he cried:
"I'll give thee gold and silver to hold,
And my good broad lands beside."

"Keep thou thyself thy silver pelf,
And thy good broad lands for me;
By God I swear this little hand fair
Thy death, brother Bear, shall be."

Home to their hall ride Bear and Pall.
 With unsuspecting mind;
 In wrathful mood, with five swains good,
 Followed Liden close behind.

Sir Pall, and Sir Bear, and Sir Liden, three were,
 And they met the boughs beneath:
 'Twas sad to view how quick out-flew
 Their faulchions from the sheath.

First Pall he slew his brother true,
 Then Bear to death he smote;
 I tell to ye for verity
 His own death wound he got.

They took up with care Sir Pall and Sir Bear,
 To the city them they bore;
 Beneath the skies in the greenwood lies
 Sir Liden amid his gore.

To the earn and the owl and the beasts that prowl
 Sir Liden's corpse they left;
 When that was said to his plighted maid
 She died of sense bereft.

Had he paid heed to his mother's rede,
 And himself to the law address'd,
 His brothers twain had remained unslain,
 And their feud had been laid at rest.

In piteous mode wept Mettelil proud,
 The death of her three sons bold:
 "Woe's me," cried she, "That e'er my eyes
 Should this sad hour behold."

For Pall she wept sore, and still, still more
 For Bear the good and brave;
 But most of all for Sir Liden's fall,
 For he had no hallowed grave.

BELARDO'S WEDDING

From the banks, in morning's beam,
 Of Xarama, famous stream;
 From the spot, or nigh it, where
 It joins the Tagus broad and fair,
 Sped Belardo, blithe and gay,
 To receive the righteous pay
 Of all the years of love he'd spent
 In doubts, and fears, and discontent—

*But happy the shepherd who finally gains
 The beautiful prize of his manifold pains.*

Unto her village now he goes
 The handsome Philis to espouse;
 For now her father, kind and bland,
 But late so stern, yields him her hand.
 Now in his eyes the shepherd shows
 The rapture in his breast that glows,
 That after storm and hurricane
 The heaven should look bright again.

*How happy the shepherd who finally gains
 The beautiful prize of his manifold pains.*

Not as of yore on foot, I trow,
 Or in albarcas goes he now;
 Albarcas made of slain wolf hide,
 In blood of cow or heifer dyed.
 O snow-white pointed shoes wore he,
 Green stockings gartered at the knee;
 Button composed of burning glass,
 Presented, mind ye, by his lass.

*How happy the shepherd who finally gains
The beautiful prize of his manifold pains.*

What a knight of gallant air
Rides he forth on sorrel mare;
Saddle of Friezeland leather made,
Fringe of the most dainty thread.
Sombbrero new, of neatest shape,
Mantle long with lengthy cape,
Sayo green, obscure to see,
Graced with much embroidery.

p. 25

*How happy the shepherd who finally gains
The beautiful prize of his labour and pains.*

By the guise in which he's drest,
His hopes are visibly exprest;
Hopes which so often damped and chilled
Are on the point to be fulfilled.
Within his bosom he doth bear
All the billets of his dear;
They are so many bills which he
Is bent to settle speedily.

*Happy the shepherd who finally gains
The beautiful prize of his manifold pains.*

Arriving at the house he saw,
Waiting for him, his father-in-law,
Who, good-bye to scoffs and slights,
Holds his stirrup whilst he lights.
Lovely Philis at the door
Calls him "husband" and "senor;"
He "senora" and "dear wife"
Calleth her, they're one for life.

p. 26

*Happy the shepherd who finally gains
The beautiful prize of his manifold pains.*

THE YEW TREE

p. 27

O tree of yew, which here I spy,
By Forida's famed monastery;
Beneath thee lies, by cold death bound,
The tongue for sweetness once renown'd.

Thou noble tree who shelterest kind,
The grave from winter's snow and wind,
May lightning never lay thee low,
Nor archer cut from thee his bow;
Nor Crispin peel thee, pegs to frame,
But may thou ever bloom the same;
A noble tree the grave to guard
Of Cambria's most illustrious bard!

LONDON:

Printed for THOMAS J. WISE, Hampstead, N.W.
Edition limited to Thirty Copies.

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Footnotes:

[5] *Stevn* and *Ting*. Both words signify a tribunal before which litigations were decided.

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AND SWAYNE TROST, AND OTHER BALLADS ***

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